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A  
CHARGE,  
DELIVERED TO THE  
CLERGY  
OF THE  
ARCHDEACONRY OF *ST. ALBANS.*

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CHARGE



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PARLIAMENT OF GREAT BRITAIN



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# CHARGE,

DELIVERED TO THE

## CLERGY

OF THE

ARCHDEACONRY OF *ST. ALBAN'S*,

AT THE

VISITATION,

HELD MAY 20, A.D. 1796. *H*

By JOSEPH HOLDEN POTT, A.M.

PREBENDARY OF LINCOLN, AND ARCHDEACON OF ST. ALBAN'S.

PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THE CLERGY.

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LONDON:

PRINTED FOR F. AND C. RIVINGTON, NO. 62, ST. PAUL'S  
CHURCH-YARD.

1796.

1758

# CHARGE

OF THE

CLERGY

IN THE

CHURCH OF ENGLAND

AND

WELSH



HELD

BY JOSEPH HOLDEN

OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

IN THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

LONDON

PRINTED BY J. JOHNSON

ST. PAUL'S CHURCH

1840



TO THE REVEREND THE

CLERGY

OF THE

ARCHDEACONRY OF ST. ALBAN'S,

THE FOLLOWING

DISCOURSE

IS DEDICATED;

IN TESTIMONY THAT AN HUMBLE DEFERENCE TO THEIR JUDGEMENT,

AND

A TRUE DESIRE TO AID THEIR PIOUS LABOURS IN THE MINISTRY,

ARE CHERISHED,

BY THEIR FAITHFUL SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

AND THE FOLLOWING THE

CHURCH

OF THE

ARCHDEACONRY OF ST. ALBANS

THE FOLLOWING

DISCOURSE



IN

IN TESTIMONY THAT AN HONORABLE DEED WAS DONE TO THEIR HONOR

AND

A FAREWELL TO AND THEIR TIOUS LABOURS IN THE MINISTRY

AND CHURCH

BY THEIR PATRONS

THE AUTHOR



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## CHARGE, &c.

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MY REVEREND BRETHREN,

**T**HE course of those studies and enquiries which are of chief importance to all men, but particularly proper to the Ministry, must have led you to remark the injury redounding to the cause of truth, and to the common interests of mankind, from inflexible attachments to frivolous or even hurtful points of usage and opinion; the growth of ignorant or careless ages.

They who challenge an infallible authority to the single judgment of their Church, have pledged themselves by the same assumption, to maintain every circumstance of practice or position, adopted through mistaken zeal, devised through partial interests, or raised into credit silently and imperceptibly, as the just rules of Faith and Discipline have sunk into corruption, or declined from their first vigour and integrity. An infallible authority can admit of no retractions.

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By another lofty claim, the same men have been driven to the hard task of reconciling with their pretensions to antiquity, many articles in their belief, and many things in common use among them, which have no sanction from the Word of God; which gather no support from the first writers, or the earliest councils of the Church; whose spurious birth, even to the most exact dates and periods of their first appearance, and subsequent encrease, is well known. The successive introduction of many of the grossest scandals in their worship, faith, and discipline, have frequently been traced, with indubitable evidence, and full precision. Thus the strife concerning images, which terminated in the depravation of religious exercises, gave birth accidentally to new notions of the Eucharist, by which a point of doctrine was corrupted. The Cup was then taken from the Laity; and thus a piece of discipline was added, to match these novelties in faith and worship. The earliest of these errors, does not reach above the eighth century; and the latest, is included in the fourteenth. But the glory of exemplifying in its full extent the practice of adhering to abuses once adopted, was kept for the succeeding age. Twelve articles were then added to the christian Creed: and the scheme of legitimating by vague pleas

of illegitimate authority can admit of no objections



of tradition, or by authoritative sentences, the base progeny of artifice and superstition, was completed.

To such innovations, the Church of Rome has tied herself so effectually, by her proud challenge of infallible prerogative, that there remains no place for concession. The true meaning and extent of Christ's promise to his Church, must first be acknowledged. It must first be confessed, that infallible truth in the object, and infallible perceptions in those who are conversant about it, are distinct things. It must first be owned that the assurance which our Lord gave, that his Church should not fail from off the earth, or be swallowed by the gates of the grave, is consistent with that known threat, which declares that the various apostacies in faith or holiness, which may take place in any one Church, may destroy its title: and where shall the romish See find its exemption from that peril? Let the challenge, then, be reduced to the real tenor of Christ's promise, which engages that such failures shall not take place universally, and there will be room to search into those errors, which, through the strange conceit of particular infallibility, bind with indissoluble ties. Remove that proud pretence, and they who have dealt the sentence of excision so liberally against purer

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Churches,

Churches, may be made to see the danger of their own defilements.

I will not take upon me to deny, that there may not have been in every Church and congregation of Believers, some portion of the same spirit of reluctance, indisposing them to recede from their judgement, even on the fullest evidence of mispersuasion. We behold the Greek Church persisting to this day in her peculiar error, long since refuted, concerning the procession of the Holy Spirit. I will not take upon me to assert, that an unrelenting adherence in the several contending parties, to things of far less moment, may not have operated most unhappily in our own country. Nor will I venture to affirm, that the compliance of St. Paul with the desires of many, on the one hand; or his frequent cautions against immoderate scruples, on the other, have been always properly regarded.

But I hasten to the main scope of this address. Whatever mischief you may have remarked as springing from this reluctance to concede, where concession in great points might be necessary to retract from error, or where concession in indifferent and uninteresting matters, might promote the bond of union; whatever just conclusions you may have gathered from this  
view



view of human frailty and perverseness, I will venture to suppose, that you have not failed to notice as fatal and as frequent mischiefs arising from the prevalence of a different spirit; from an undue readiness to concede important points; either for the purpose of avoiding difficulties, from the desire of pressing some one topic in a controverted subject in preference to others, or for the sake of some new theory. Many such concessions, in Writers of no mean name, might I think be pointed out; and that vigilance which is constantly required in the discharge of the pastoral office, cannot be exerted more profitably, or more seasonably, than in suggesting cautions against such ill-boding desertions of very solid truths.

Before I proceed to instance in particulars, I shall propose one rule, which I apprehend will apply to the two opposite sources of abuse; serving equally to remedy the mischief of inflexible adherence to all points once decided; and to check the rash and unnecessary readiness to relinquish well-established verities, and received opinions.

The rule which I would propose, is that which was given to us for the purpose of guiding and determining the worship, faith, and discipline of the christian Church.

Church. The Word of God, the sacred Scriptures, constitute this rule, to which no additions must be made, and from which no declensions must be suffered. The Creeds which are expressly and distinctly founded on this basis, will stand sure : but all weak inventions, all groundless and pernicious supplements, accumulations, and incumbrances, will come under the just sentence of rejection.

Having fixed this standard of appeal, you will not wonder that I begin the few remarks which I have to offer upon the subject of undue concessions, by advert- ing to some points, insinuated or asserted, in which the dignity and value of the Holy Scriptures are deeply implicated, and, according to my apprehension, considerably lowered, and impaired. The inspiration, through which the Scriptures were composed, is the topic here regarded. On this subject, many needless, new, and perilous concessions have been made.

Much has been yielded in this most important point, by persons professing not to call in question the divine commission and authority of the sacred Writers, or to impeach their inspiration in the main. Of course they admit the infallible certainty of their testimony in many circumstances and particulars. It may be shown that  
this



this limited acknowledgement will prove more than is intended by it, and will be found inconsistent with those exceptions for which it professes to leave room. It is intimated that there are in the sacred volume argumentative, indifferent, and inconsiderable circumstances, about which the Apostles and Evangelists might be permitted to use their own memories and reasonings: it is further intimated that in using this permission, their memories might fail, and their reasonings prove inconclusive. In other more important points, it is confessed that their inspiration must be acknowledged, and their infallible authority admitted.

But if the assertion of a divine and infallible authority attaching to the Scriptures in all particulars, so that they include no real error or defect, be testified in the sacred writings; we shall have the word of the Apostles in a point which cannot be regarded as one of those small circumstances, about which they might be supposed to offer an uncertain testimony; and we shall have this word, in complete exclusion to all dubious or gratuitous concessions.

Let us hear what the sacred Writers unanimously testify on this head.

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The writings of the former Testament are called "the Oracles of God," and again "the lively Oracles." Most solemn and significant is the Prophet's appeal to them, "to the Law, and to the Testimony: if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them." Concerning them David also speaks thus, "He sheweth his Word unto Jacob; his statutes and judgements unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation; and as for his judgements they have not known them." To the same guides likewise our Saviour, in his parable, remits the wayward and unstable, "if they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." "Search," saith he, "the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me." The Apostle witnesses that "whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scripture, might have hope:" declaring in another place "that such things were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." St. Peter says, that "holy men of old time, spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." "Well spake the Holy Ghost, by such a Prophet;" is the Gospel phrase, when the written Word is cited,



Indeed if a difference could be shown between what was spoken, and the written Word, (and even this frivolous exception has been offered) the authority of the latter would preponderate with regard to us, for whose sakes it was written.

We may pass on to observe, that it is every way reasonable, and even necessary for us to suppose, that as God inspired the former Witneses of his will, he would inspire the latter: they had at least as weighty messages to announce, and they expressly vindicated to themselves the same commission.

St. Luke declares that he writes his Gospel to Theophilus, "that he might know the certainty of those things in which he had been instructed." Having been instructed in them, it is hard to say how their certainty could be better known to him by Scripture; unless some peculiar mark of the divine authority attached to the written Word of God. But waving this remark, which may appear precarious, let us consider, in what way Theophilus could be certain of the things contained in any writing, if that writing did not involve indubitable and sure grounds of certainty. It may be thought perhaps that too much stress is here laid upon one word. It may be moral certainty, or

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such certainty as the assurance of any credible Witness might beget, which was intended. The testimonies which shall be further cited will, I conceive, effectually cut off that evasion. They will prove that an higher certainty was signified: a certainty, resulting from a true and proper inspiration, in points where no previous knowledge could exist: a certainty, arising from an uniform and unremitted oversight and guidance, in things to which the memory might suffice: a certainty, springing from an absolute preservation from all error, from all loose accommodations, and from all inconsequence where argument was needful.

Many most important doctrines of the Faith are founded on the reasonings of the Apostles. If we suppose them to be inspired historians of the facts only, but liable to error or futility in their reasonings and deductions, either when they wrote as Advocates, or gave counsel as Advisers, all ground of certainty, in many distinguishing tenets of our Faith, will be subverted. In that case we must betake ourselves once more to Tradition; or to Church-authority; or to the dictate of any man, whom we may think wiser, or better skilled in argument than the Apostles. If we cannot rest upon such dubious testimonies, we must have recourse to the wild conceit of immediate and infallible  
revela-



revelations to each individual; a notion particularly injurious to the credit of the holy Scriptures, and as favourable to fanatical delusion.

I have named three grounds of certainty in Scripture, as they have been commonly enumerated and distinguished, and I conceive that they are clearly and positively challenged by the sacred Writers, in their own behalf.

Our Lord says to his Apostles, "Ye shall be my Witnesses;" and in order to qualify them for that end, "behold," says he, "I send the promise of my Father upon you."

With regard to that chief degree of inspiration (if it be safe to distinguish it by measures and degrees) which was necessary for the communication of things before unknown, and inscrutable by human reason, this assurance of the Spirit was given to the Apostles, "he shall lead you into all truth." St. Paul having declared that "the natural man could not know such things because they were spiritually discerned;" and having plainly asserted, that "God had revealed such things to the Apostles by his Spirit," adds, with reference

ference to their teaching, " We have the mind of  
" Christ."

We have more general and comprehensive testimonies, which embrace the whole body of the Scriptures.

The word Testament, imports the validity of the instrument; its genuine character, and sacred seal.

Concerning the epistles of St. Paul, St. Peter gives this testimony: " even as our beloved Brother Paul,  
" also, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath  
" written unto you, as also in all his epistles, speaking  
" in them of these things, in which are some things  
" hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned  
" and unstable do wrest, as they do also the other  
" Scriptures, to their own destruction." Thus the whole of St. Paul's epistles are attributed to the wisdom given to him of God. The remarkable expression, " as they do also the other Scriptures," shews that they were set upon the same footing with other inspired writings. The peculiar danger of wresting Scripture, which is likewise mentioned, concurs also to prove that it was the known design of God to preserve the Faith, and to refel all vain inventions, by means of such a volume. Thus they are called " the Scriptures," by



way of eminence. Thus also they are emphatically denominated "the Word of God." Thus they are called the "Word of Truth," which is to be divided or expounded rightly; from which expression alone their authority as a Law may be collected: and concerning the peril of adding to them, or subtracting from them, what St. John says, may be generally applied, "if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book; and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life." Nor less generally may those other words of this Apostle be applied, "these sayings are faithful, and true."

St. Peter declares, that the end of his writing was, "that after his decease, they might have such things always in remembrance:" "therefore, he adds, this second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you, in both which I stir up your minds by way of remembrance, that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the Holy Prophets, and of *the commandment of us the Apostles of the Lord and Saviour.*" When the same Apostle says, "no prophecy of the Scripture is of private interpretation," he is thought by many to mean suggestion or impulse, rather

rather than interpretation, because he is discoursing of the rise of Prophecy. If the word *επιλυσίς* will bear this sense, the context answers strongly to it; since it follows directly that "Prophecy came not of old time, " by the will of man." But with submission, I conceive, that if the word interpretation be kept, the meaning will not be, that the public judgement of the Church is the sole interpreter of Scripture, according to the romish notion. The sense will be that no Scripture when interpreted or expounded is of private meaning or intention, or of partial obligation, but binds as a sentence grounded on a public law.

St. Paul meets the question here discussed, with a full and peremptory sentence, "If any man," says he, "be a Prophet, let him acknowledge that the things " which I write unto you are the commandments of " God." He declares also that he wrote to the Philippians, for their security: "to write," saith he, "the same things now unto you, to me it is not " grievous, but for you it is safe:" And in another place he says, "I thank God without ceasing, because " when ye received the Word of God, which ye " heard of us, ye received it not as the Word of men, " but as it is in truth, the Word of God."

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To close this evidence, we cannot but remember that full and distinct assertion, "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God." Upon which I must indulge one observation, in order to induce you to consider, how impossible it is to bind men by any form of words or method of instruction, against the bias of their own perverseness. How often do we hear it objected against the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, that it is collected only by inference and deduction, from scattered proofs, and occasional assertions. The charge itself is groundless. We have the form of Baptism appointed by our Lord: in which it is impossible to think that three Persons of <sup>un</sup> equal dignity could be joined together. The being so baptized, signifies a dedication to the exercise of faith and worship in that name. We have the form of benediction used by the Apostle: concerning which it is also impossible to think, that he would have blessed his converts in other names beside that of God: and yet the Grace of Christ, and the Communion of the Spirit, are expressly included in the blessing. We have that compendious draught of our religion, wherein "our access to the Father, through the Son, "and by the Holy Ghost," is set forth: in which the same enumeration and conjunction indicate an equality of nature, and joint glory. We have even a more explicit and exact description of the several offices proper

proper to each Person, in another passage; where the Apostle ascribes the calling and election of a chosen people to the Father, their justification to the Son, and their sanctification to the Holy Ghost: comprising once more the whole Gospel in a single sentence: 1 Pet. i. 2. But suppose the charge to be well founded; grant, that we must take the proofs of our Lord's divine Nature, from some texts; and of the Divinity of the Holy Spirit, from others; and of the Unity of God, from a third class; and then by conferring them together, arrive at that obvious and inevitable conclusion, that there are three Persons in the Godhead: still we may learn from the fate of this other necessary truth—the inspiration of the sacred Scriptures—how disingenuous the cavil is, wherein the want of a distinct assertion of the whole doctrine in one sentence, is objected. It is distinctly and positively said, that “all Scripture is given by inspiration;” we are not left to collect this from scattered evidences or deductions, though such proof might be sufficient, and yet how many betray as much aversion to this truth, as to the other.

It is to be remembered further, in proof of the divine suggestion of such things as the Apostles have put to writing, that their Lord had frequently declared,  
that



that he had many things to tell them, which they could not bear at that time when he exercised his ministry among them; for which things he referred them to the teaching of the Holy Ghost. In what way, or when, were those things revealed to them; how are they revealed to us by them, unless the chosen Witnesses of Christ were inspired to teach and deliver them by word and writing?

We have now but a narrow compass left to notice the objections usually made to the total inspiration of the Scriptures: but the chief shall be enumerated.

It is observed, that the Prophets when they gave their testimony in points which were to be regarded of infallible authority, used some solemn indication that it was the Word of God which they delivered. "Thus saith the Lord" was the warning for attention, and the certain notice of a declaration of the Will of God. We might I think regard the general appeal and testimony which was last produced, as equivalent to those introductions. But this cavil, which is truly inconsiderable, might be retorted. For if those modes of speech do not attach to peculiar precepts in the writings of the Apostles, or to special passages in the

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evangelical records, we may even from thence collect that the inspiration was regular and constant\*.

A more serious objection is raised, upon a similar pretence, against the testimony of St. Paul, in some places. It is remarked that this Apostle attributes most expressly some particulars of precept to the Lord, in contradistinction from some which he restrains to his own judgement. It will be necessary to produce the passages. The Apostle had been consulted upon several topics by his Converts. He returns an answer to the first enquiry, with this restriction, "but I speak this" "by permission, and not of commandment." He passes to the next point proposed, and says, "unto the" "married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, let" "not the Wife depart from her Husband." "But to" "the rest," says the Apostle, "speak I, not the Lord:" and he then gives some further rules. He goes on to say, "now concerning Virgins, I have no commandment of" "the Lord, yet I give my judgement, as one that hath" "obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful:" and he concludes with this expression, applicable to the foregoing decisions; "I think also that I have the Spirit of" "God." From these passages, some would collect that

\* See Lowth's Vindication, &c. p. 111.



the Apostle makes a clear distinction between the commandments of the Lord, and his own advice. He does so : but the conclusion which is aimed at, will not follow notwithstanding. A difference of authority and inspiration is inferred : but the inference is not just. We may observe first, that Many content themselves with answering, that if the Apostle did except these particular advices, from having the divine sanction, it would not affect the rest of the Scripture. Exceptions confirm the Rule, in all points not excepted : and he might be directed by the Spirit, so to give his judgment in those instances, in order to show that they were left to human prudence. This answer is not unsatisfactory, but it is unnecessary. The whole conclusion which is founded on the difference of expression in St. Paul, may be denied. The Apostle seems evidently to distinguish between those cases of marriage and divorce, which our Lord had actually decided ; about which he had given a command ; and those which he, the Apostle of the Lord, decided, not indeed upon the ground of any previous sentence of our Lord, but by his apostolical authority, aided and directed by the Holy Spirit. Why is it to be concluded that because St. Paul alledges the commandment given before by Christ, in the one case, and gives his own decision, in the other, that he renounces the apostolical authority

and inspiration in the second instance? His own words prove the contrary. He says "he gives his judgement as one that has found grace to be faithful;" and he asserts in plain terms with reference to those determinations, that "he had the Spirit of God." To that peremptory sense, and not to a doubtful one, the learned Dr. Whitby shows that the words, *δοκῶ δὲ κατὰ πνεῦμα θεοῦ ἔχειν*, may be rendered. That Commentator concludes his observations upon the passage with these words, "this, say some, is not spoken with the authority of an Apostle, or a Teacher sent from God, but in such a stile as implies an ordinary assistance, such as any skilful Pastor may still expect. But these men do not well consider that the Apostle was writing to them who were apt to question his Apostleship, and who required a proof of Christ speaking in him, 2 Cor. xiii. 3. to whom it was proper to say, whatsoever you may conceive of me, I suppose I have the Spirit of God. Nor, secondly, do they consider that *δοκέω* is frequently an expressive\*, and *δοκῶ ἔχειν* may be here rendered, 'I have the Spirit of God.'" Perhaps the words would be best rendered, "I trust, I have the Spirit of God."

\* He supports this criticism by various references to other places in the New Testament.



It is further objected, that some parts of the Scriptures of the New Testament, were written on particular emergencies. If particular emergencies produced lessons which may apply to Christians in all times, and gave occasion for many general directions, how can this be urged in detraction from the influences of the Holy Spirit? How many of our Lord's replies and dictates were drawn from him by accidental queries, by cases propounded to him by persons who sought the solution of their own difficulty, or of some feigned circumstance; and yet how fully do the answers meet the wants, and serve to regulate the judgement of the christian Church in most important matters. The authority with respect to us, is not diminished, because the answer might be given to a Samaritan or a Canaanite in their particular concerns.

It is objected, that some books of Scripture were not received in all Churches at the same time; nor universally admitted for several ages. But it is no impeachment of the Scripture, that the Canon was not completed at once. The Apostles went forth to all nations; their journeys were various and distant; pursued in times of difficulty and trouble. Can we wonder then that some Churches should have inspired writings, which others did not receive so soon; or that they

proceeded with delay and caution in admitting them? When we find them after due examination, universally received, the delay and hesitation, which is objected, will serve to confirm their title; proving that full satisfaction was obtained, and that the judgement on them was not credulous and hasty. It was long before the conversion of the Gentiles was known to the Church\* at Jerusalem; but that happy change was no less real during all that period.

It is urged again, that the Scriptures may have been corrupted. With regard to the Scriptures of the Old Testament, their integrity down to our Lord's time, is proved by his acknowledgement, express or tacit; either when he appealed to them, or when in reproofing the Scribes and Pharisees for their manifold corruptions of the word by their traditions, he yet, never charges them with having vitiated the text itself. An offence of too great magnitude to have been overlooked, had it existed. Since our Saviour's time, as well as during many previous ages, it is impossible that these Scriptures should have been corrupted, from the multitude of copies spread abroad, by which any such abuse

\* The noble author of the *Miscellanea Sacra*, supposes it to have been unknown to the body of that Church, more than twelve years.

could



could not fail to have been detected. The same argument is applicable to the Scriptures of the New Testament. They are cited also by many writers of the first ages, and still appear the same.

It is objected, that the Septuagint is often quoted in the New Testament, in preference to the Hebrew text; by which means the authority of the latter seems to be disparaged. In answer to this, a learned Prelate observes, "that the New-Testament-reading of any  
 " texts which are taken out of the Old, does if duly  
 " examined, at the last result, and in effect, accord  
 " with the Old: and however different the words  
 " appear, the sense is coincident:" and he remarks that the Septuagint, as a known version, was used ordinarily; but very frequently deserted: that a latitude was commonly taken, according to the general purport of the text, without adhering to the words of any version. He proves his observation by a large collation of texts cited out of the Old Testament, and remarks, "that it is not the Septuagint absolutely, which  
 " is kept to, but the Septuagint, as agreeing with the  
 " Hebrew." He says further, "whether the Evangelists accord with the Septuagint, or translate  
 " anew from the Hebrew, they generally confirm the  
 " Hebrew text as original and authentic: for of the  
 " forty

“ forty texts above-examined, there are twenty-two  
 “ in which the Evangelists having left the Septuagint,  
 “ and either in exact expression, or in general sense,  
 “ or in both, kept to the Hebrew, have confirmed the  
 “ Hebrew against the Septuagint.” He adds, “ it is  
 “ plain the Evangelists, in the instances brought, ge-  
 “ nerally leave the Septuagint, where they leave the  
 “ Hebrew. Had the Septuagint contradicted the  
 “ Hebrew, and the Evangelists in such contradictions  
 “ kept with them, the case had been otherwise : but  
 “ the main doctrine and sense being the same still, by  
 “ this following the Septuagint there is no impeach-  
 “ ment at all of the Hebrew \*.”

I think it my duty to acknowledge, that the fore-  
 going observations have appeared to me to be par-  
 ticularly reasonable.

A distinguished Writer of the present age, in his  
 view of the Evidences of Christianity, speaks thus, “ if  
 “ we once admit the fallibility of the apostolic judge-  
 “ ment, where are we to stop, or in what can we rely  
 “ upon it ? To which questions, (he adds) as argu-  
 “ ing with unbelievers, and as arguing for the sub-

\* Scripture authentic, and Faith certain. By Edward Lord Bp.  
 of Cork and Ross. P. 39. 57. 68. 135. 138.

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“stantial truth of the christian history, and for that  
 “alone, it is competent to the Advocate of Christia-  
 “nity to reply, give me the Apostle’s testimony, and  
 “I do not stand in need of their judgement; give me  
 “the facts, and I have ample security for every con-  
 “clusion I want\*.” The learned Writer does not  
 go this length in concession; he adds, “although I  
 “think, that it is competent to the christian Apologist  
 “to return this answer; I do not think that it is the  
 “only answer which the objection is capable of re-  
 “ceiving. The two following cautions, founded, I  
 “apprehend, in the most reasonable distinctions, will  
 “exclude all uncertainty upon this head, which can  
 “be attended with danger.” Then follow the caution-  
 ary remarks, in which I conceive very large conces-  
 sions are made. We are told “first to separate what  
 “was the object of the apostolic mission, and declared  
 “by them to be so, from what was extraneous to it,  
 “or only incidentally connected with it.” The in-  
 stance he then brings of a topic so distinguished from  
 the direct object of the Apostle’s mission, and as a point  
 incidentally connected with it, is the case of demonia-  
 cal possession. He professes not to deliver his judge-

\* View of the Evidences of Christianity, vol. iii. part 3. chap. 2.  
 p. 110.

ment in this case, “ concerning the reality of which  
 “ (he says) as this place will not admit the examina-  
 “ tion, or the production of arguments, on either side  
 “ of the question, it would be arrogance in me to  
 “ deliver any judgement. And it is unnecessary.  
 “ For what I am concerned to observe is, that even  
 “ they who think that it was a general and erroneous  
 “ opinion of those times, and that the Writers of the  
 “ New Testament, in common with the Writers of  
 “ that age, fell into the manner of speaking and of  
 “ thinking upon the subject, which then universally  
 “ prevailed; need not be alarmed at the concession, as  
 “ though they had any thing to fear from it, for the  
 “ truth of Christianity.”

My reverend Brethren, I think they would have very serious grounds for alarm, if they thought so. To hear our Saviour address himself to the evil Spirits in possessed persons, and in the very narrative whose historical truth is so contended for, to hear their answers; to read the record of signal miracles performed in their ejection; to hear what is said to have been their cry — and to treat all this as a connivance at popular opinion, would be to suppose a strain of collusion, inconsistent with the dignity of a divine Agent; inconsistent with the candour and simplicity of him who came to rid the world of



of error, in all points connected, as this is, with the kingdom of God, as distinguished from the kingdom of Satan. It would argue a degree of ignorance or artifice, no less inconsistent with the character of inspired Writers, penning their relations for the instruction of all ages. When we hear our Lord speaking to the evil Spirit, and saying, "I charge thee come out of him, and enter no more into him:" when the Evangelist saith, "the Spirit cried, and rent him fore, and came out of him:" when such is the record, is it possible to think that he who called himself, the Truth, would so accommodate his words to vulgar error: to an error not like those which are included in ordinary modes of speech, adapted rather to appearances, than to any system of Philosophy, such as the going down of the Sun, or such as analogy requires, to render what is said of God intelligible to us, but an error, if it were such, founded in complete delusion\*.

I am willing to think that the Author of the Evidences does not make this concession on his own part. He conceives that it might be made with safety, by those who embrace the notion of an accommodation in

\* This subject is well handled in Mr. Gray's ingenious Discourses. Disc. 4th.

this point. But he adds these words, which seem to proceed from himself, and refer plainly to one of his distinctions, in the double caution before mentioned. “ The doctrine was not what Christ brought into the world. It appears in the christian record incidentally and accidentally, as being the subsisting opinion of the age and country in which his ministry was exercised.”

The same ingenious Writer had before spoken favourably of accommodations of another kind. “ It is,” says he, “ probable to my apprehension, that many of those quotations of the Old Testament found in the New, were intended by the Writers of the New Testament as nothing more than accommodations\*.” To which opinion I had rather oppose the words of Dr. Whitby than my own. He says, “ we have reason to believe, that either the Holy Ghost suggested to the memories of the inspired Writers those Scriptures which they used in the Sacred Writings to convince them; or else presided so over them as not to suffer them to make any inferences from them, which were not agreeable to the true intent and meaning of them; though at this

\* P. 107.

“ distance



“ distance of time, we may not always be able to  
 “ discern the strength and clearness of the conse-  
 “ quence\*.”

The second caution suggested by the Author of the Evidences is, that, “ in reading the Apostolical  
 “ writings, we should distinguish between their doc-  
 “ trines, and their arguments. Their doctrines came  
 “ to them by revelation properly so called; yet in  
 “ propounding these doctrines in their writings or  
 “ discourses, they were wont to illustrate, enforce, and  
 “ support them, by such analogies, arguments, and  
 “ considerations, as their own thoughts suggested †.”  
 He states an instance of this, and then adds, “ the  
 “ doctrine itself must be received; but is it necessary  
 “ in order to defend Christianity, to defend the pro-  
 “ priety of every comparison, or the validity of every  
 “ argument, which the Apostle has brought into dis-  
 “ cussion? The same observation, he remarks,  
 “ applies to some other instances; and is,” saith he,  
 “ in my opinion, very well founded.” He strengthens  
 this opinion, by a passage from Bishop Burnet, who  
 says, “ when divine Writers argue upon any point,  
 “ we are always bound to believe the conclusions that

\* Whitby's General Preface, p. 11.

† View of the Evidences, &c. p. 114.

“ their

“ their reasonings end in, as parts of divine revelation;  
 “ but we are not bound to make out, or even to assent  
 “ to, all the premises made use of by them in their  
 “ whole extent, unless it appear plainly that they affirm  
 “ the premises, as expressly as they do the conclusion  
 “ proved by them.” Not to dwell upon the strange  
 conceit of rejecting the premises, but adopting the  
 conclusion, (the words “ all the premises, and in all  
 “ their extent,” may seem perhaps to palliate that  
 position, certainly they make the whole assertion dubious  
 and confused :) but waving this, how inconsistent must  
 it appear to be with every just conception of the super-  
 intendence of the Holy Spirit, to permit an Apostle to  
 use false premises, in the whole, or in part, to  
 establish a true conclusion. Much do I prefer the  
 words of Dr. Whitby, who says, “ I do not grant that  
 “ St. Paul any where implies that he doth not always  
 “ use the best arguments, but sometimes such as are  
 “ better fitted to the capacities and notions of those he  
 “ writes to; for if so, by what rules shall we be able  
 “ to distinguish betwixt those arguments on which  
 “ we may safely rely, as being absolutely true, and  
 “ those which are only accommodated to the notions  
 “ of men with whom he had to do? St. Paul does  
 “ indeed say, *ἀνθρώπινον λέγω*, *I speak after the manner*  
 “ *of men*, or what is common to men, *because of the*  
 “ *infirm-*



“ *infirmity of your flesh*, but he speaks not this by  
 “ way of excuse for not using the best arguments  
 “ he could, but he speaks this by way of illuf-  
 “ tration of his argument or exhortation.” The  
 fame Writer proves this further, and he then adds,  
 “ as for the arguments they use *ad hominem*, as they  
 “ are very few, so is it only requisite that they should  
 “ be truly convincing upon the principles which such  
 “ men owned and received.” Thus he shows that  
 the Apostle argued with the Corinthians, who denied  
 the resurrection. He assumes their false opinion, and  
 urges from it, “ then are we false Witnesses;” then “ is  
 “ your faith vain.” “ So that his discourse is only  
 “ an argument *ab absurdo*. But,” says he, “ that the  
 “ Apostles any where use such arguments *ad homi-*  
 “ *nem*, as proceed on such principles as were generally  
 “ admitted in their age, without considering whether  
 “ they were true or false, I utterly deny\*.”

Upon the subject of the Apostle’s arguments, we  
 may also call to mind an expression of the justly  
 respected Mr. Boyle. “ When I remember,” says he,  
 “ how many things I once thought incoherent, in  
 “ which I now think I discern a close, though mystic

\* General Preface, p. 13.

“ sense ;

“ sense ; when I reflect on the Author, and the ends  
 “ of Scripture, and when I allow myself to imagine  
 “ how exquisite a symmetry, though as yet undiscerned  
 “ by me, Omniscience doth, and after ages, probably,  
 “ will discover in the Scripture’s method, in spite of  
 “ those seeming discomposures that now puzzle me :  
 “ when I think upon all this, I say, I think it just to  
 “ check my forward thoughts \*.”

The author of the Evidences remarks, that “ a refe-  
 “ rence in the New Testament to a passage in the Old,  
 “ does not so fix its authority, as to exclude all enquiry  
 “ into its credibility, or into the separate reasons upon  
 “ which that credibility is founded.” He adds,  
 “ that it is an unwarrantable, as well as unsafe rule,  
 “ to lay down concerning the Jewish History, what  
 “ never was laid down concerning any other, that  
 “ either every particular of it must be true, or the  
 “ whole false †.” Upon which words, two observa-  
 tions may be made. First, that we take the proof  
 alluded to, of the divine authority of every book in the  
 Canon of the Old Testament, from the general appeal  
 which is made to them, as the Oracles of God,  
 throughout the Gospel. The bare citation of any

\* Boyle’s Considerations, &c. p. 73.

† P. 122.



passage might not otherwise serve to fix its authority. The supposed quotation from Aratus in the Acts of the Apostles, does not lead us to infer that such a sentence was Scripture. Nor is that mention which is made of Jannes and Jambres, thereby constituted Scripture, as to its original. As to its truth, I conceive it is infallibly determined, by being recorded as true, by the pen of an Apostle. The next remark relates to that expression that, "it is an unwarrantable and unsafe rule to lay down concerning the jewish history, what never was laid down concerning any other." The sacred Scriptures must be intended in this place by the jewish history, the question is about them. But does any other history stand upon the same footing, or challenge to itself the same authority? If not, there is a Rule laid down at once, which never was, and never can be applicable to any other existing history. Is it unsafe or unwarrantable, to say concerning sacred and inspired Historians, that which no One, who acknowledges their authority, ever thought of applying to ordinary writers? But we must look to the preceding pages, for the ground of this comparison between the jewish history, and any other. It is there observed, "that to make Christianity answerable with its life, for the circumstantial truth of each separate passage of the Old Testament, the genuineness of

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" every

“ every book, the information, fidelity, and judgement  
 “ of every writer in it, is to bring, I will not say  
 “ great, but unnecessary difficulties into the whole  
 “ system.” In this sentence, several things of different  
 importance are mixed together. What follows is more  
 explicit. “ These books were universally read and  
 “ received by the Jews, in our Saviour’s time. He and  
 “ his Apostles, in common with all other Jews, referred  
 “ to them, alluded to them, used them. Yet except  
 “ where he expressly ascribes a divine authority to parti-  
 “ cular predictions, I do not know that we can  
 “ strictly draw any conclusion from the books being  
 “ so used and applied, beside the proof, which it  
 “ unquestionably is, of their notoriety and reception at  
 “ that time\*.” Thus the general appeal to the Scrip-  
 tures of the Old Testament is abandoned; and the  
 whole sanction of the Word of God, is confined to  
 those predictions, which are expressly cited as bearing  
 the divine authority. I leave you, my reverend Bre-  
 thren, to consider how far the page of Scripture would  
 be narrowed by this restriction; how many prophecies  
 would lose their force, and become useless in proof of  
 the divine Will accomplished in the Gospel; how  
 many precepts would fall back to the level of profane

\* Page 118, 119.



wisdom and ordinary sayings; how many types, and intimations of the purposes of God, would forego their whole significance. A far different sense is couched in those words of the Evangelist; “and beginning at  
 “Moses, and *all* the Prophets, he expounded unto  
 “them in *all* the Scriptures, the things concerning  
 “himself.” And again “he said unto them, these  
 “are the words which I spake unto you while I was  
 “yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which  
 “were written in the law of Moses, and in the Pro-  
 “phets, and in the Psalms concerning me.” Here is  
 no restriction to historical Scriptures, no partial appli-  
 cation from books only commonly received, but a  
 general and direct appeal to all the Scriptures. In con-  
 formity to this general view, Mr. Boyle remarks,  
 “that God who was so precisely exact, in the dimen-  
 “sions, proportions, and all other circumstances of the  
 “antient Tabernacle, though it were but a typical  
 “and temporary structure, ought to be supposed at  
 “least as careful to let nothing superfluous intrude  
 “into those volumes, which being consigned to the  
 “Church for the perpetual use and instruction of it,  
 “must contain nothing un conducive to those designs;  
 “the least text in it being as contributory to the com-  
 “pleting of the Bible, as every loup or pin was to the  
 F 2 “perfect-

“ perfection of the Tabernacle \*.” Nor was this a casual sentiment, or rhetorical flourish: he says again, with no less energy, “ a wary person reads the wisest authors, with a reflection that they may deceive him, by being themselves deceived; and undergoes a double labour, the one in investigating the meaning; and the other in examining the truth of what they deliver: but in the Bible, we are eased of the latter of these troubles; for if we find the sense of a text of Scripture, we cannot miss a truth †.”

I pass now to the conclusion of the volumes on the Evidences, where these words appear, “ when we reflect that some of those from whom the books proceeded, are related to have themselves wrought miracles, to have been the subject of miracles, or of supernatural assistance in propagating the religion, we may perhaps be led to think that more credit, or a different kind of credit, is due to these accounts, than what can be claimed by merely human testimony. But this is an argument which cannot be addressed to Sceptics or Unbelievers. A man must be a Christian before he can receive it. The inspi-

\* Considerations, &c. p. 79.

† Page 124.



“ration of the historical Scriptures, the nature, degree,  
 “and extent of that inspiration, are questions un-  
 “doubtedly of serious discussion, but they are questions  
 “among Christians themselves, and not between them  
 “and others. The doctrine itself is by no means neces-  
 “sary to the belief of christianity, which must, in the  
 “first instance at least, depend upon the ordinary  
 “maxims of historical credibility \*.”

The question, my reverend Brethren, of the true and proper foundation of divine Faith, would lead into a wide field. It suffices for my purpose to produce that acknowledged definition of it, that it is an assent to truths credible upon the testimony of God. Take it in the words of Bishop Pearson †. “Divine Faith  
 “is an assent unto something as credible upon the  
 “testimony of God. This assent is the highest kind  
 “of Faith, because the object hath the highest credi-  
 “bility, because grounded on the testimony of God,  
 “which is infallible.” To which he adds afterwards,  
 “that Truth then which is testified by God, hath a  
 “divine credibility: and an assent unto it as so credi-  
 “ble, is divine Faith.”

\* Page 236.

† Exposition of the Creed, p. 5. fol. ed. 1718.

It is not an indifferent matter, even in the first instance, and with regard to those who do not yet believe, whether the testimony which is offered to them be pronounced to be divine. I am not ignorant of what may be replied; that we must still resort to lower testimony for the vouchers to the sacred writings; that we must not assume the inspiration of the evangelical Witnesses, in order to prove the authority of Scripture by their word, and then prove their inspiration by the Scripture. We should revolve thus in a circle, as they do who strive to prove the infallibility of the Church by Scripture, and yet prove the Scripture by the sole voice of their Church. Nor do I by any means intend to controvert that mode of ascertaining Scripture by the suffrage of those who lived nearest to the time when it was written, and by the consent of Believers in all ages: in which sense, and not as ascribing any absolute or infallible authority to the Church, the famous passage in St. Austin is to be understood, “*evangelio non crederem, nisi ecclesiæ catholicæ me commoveret autoritas,*” that he speaks of the common testimony borne to the Scriptures by Believers is evident, because he is discoursing in that place, not of the doctrines contained in Scripture, but of the copies and writings. But surely we are not to restrain the motives to credibility, even with reference to the sacred books,



books, entirely to such evidence. The proper marks of the divine authority are so interwoven in those writings, and the promise of the Holy Spirit to attentive minds so coupled with the publication of the Word of God, that without the wild conceit of particular and immediate revelations to each person; or the no less groundless notion of infallibility attaching to the Church, as Mistress of our faith; the Grace of Faith, both in its principles and its motives, its first inducements and whole growth, may still be properly and truly called divine. It is grounded on divine testimony, and it is capable of assurance in that testimony, by more than meer historical persuasion. I am well aware that those Evidences by which the authority of Scripture may be proved by outward testimony, must not be excluded, when we contend for a proper light in Scripture, "whereby," saith an eminent Divine, referring to S. Chrysostom, "we may be sufficiently assured that the Scriptures are the true and lively Oracles of God—from the spiritual force and efficacy which is never wanting unto them that do not wilfully resist it, to move and induce them to a certain and firm belief\*." Of this intrinsic character Salvian speaks thus, "*alia omnia dicta argu-*

\* Bishop Cosin's History of the Canon of Scripture, p. 4, 5.

"mentis

“ *mentis ac testibus eget, Dei autem Sermo ipse sibi testis est \**.” Thus David says, “ the Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the Soul : the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple : the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart : the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.” Even these expressions have been transcended, and the efficacy of the Scripture further magnified. “ The word of God,” saith the Apostle, “ is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow ; and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” Thus then, although it may suffice to convince the unbeliever, that we have such testimonies for the truth, as they are bound in reason to admit as credible ; and although we may not be able to demonstrate to the obstinate opposer, that the Scriptures cannot possibly be false, yet the ground of certainty to the Believer will remain sure notwithstanding. Instead of trusting altogether to external testimony, or of denying it its due weight, we may with the Samaritans give credit to such attestations, and yet say also, “ now we believe not because of

\* De Guber. L. 3.



“ thy saying (only) for we have heard him ourselves;”  
or with the inhabitants of Berea, who stand so  
especially commended, we may search the Scriptures,  
after other testimony; and consult them as the au-  
thentic records of the Will of God.

In a word, if the evidence on which we receive the  
Scriptures were limited to human testimony, or histo-  
rical deduction, I deny not that Faith might still rest  
ultimately for its object on divine testimony. The  
miracles which Israel saw, were not less miracles be-  
cause they saw them not with a preternatural sense,  
but with the common organs of sight. But then the  
inspiration of the Scriptures, the proof of which is  
various, must be maintained: they must not be set  
upon the footing of other histories, in which case the  
basis of divine Faith would be endangered\*. Nor  
should it be forgotten that external testimony does not  
constitute, in any period of conversion, the sole evi-  
dence of the Word of God, or the single motive to  
belief †.

My

\* Titubabit autem fides si divinarum scripturarum vacillat auto-  
ritas. Augt. de Doctr. Christ. L. 1. C. 38.

† Bishop Stillingfleet in his rational Account of the Grounds of  
the Protestant Religion, having very eloquently pressed the excellence

My reverend Brethren, I have offered that part of my observations which relate to the very able Author of the Evidences, with great reluctance. But in matters of such moment the only reference must be to that rule for which both he and I contend, though with some variety of sentiment.

The next, and last consideration which I have to offer, and which I would fain urge in my own behalf, is, that in such disquisitions, what is said must be regarded; and not who says it.

of Scripture, as a moral rule; as containing "an inexpressible energy  
"and force;" as holding out the accomplishment of Prophecy and the  
work of miracle; adds, "these very things now to us are internal  
"in the Scripture; the motives of Faith being delivered to us in the  
"same books, that the doctrine of Faith is: in which sense the  
"Scriptures may well be said to be proved divine by themselves, and  
"that they appear infallible by the light which is in them," p. 222.

7 JUC 6

FINIS.